

# Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Inviolability of Holy Scripture

*Essay presented by the Rev. Wallace H. McLaughlin  
at the Second Annual Convention  
of the [Orthodox Lutheran Conference](#), August 1952*

## I. The Inspiration of Holy Scripture

1. Verbal inspiration, not "real-inspiration", nor "personal-inspiration"

2. Imparting of the words, not more guidance, assistance, or government

3. Plenary inspiration, not limited to that previously unknown to the writers or to "religious truths"

## II. The Inerrancy of Holy Scripture

## III. The Inviolability of Holy Scripture

### Introduction

Since Friday, June 30, 1950, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod can no longer be counted among church-bodies which uncompromisingly champion the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration. On that day the corporate body of the Missouri Synod by majority voice vote adopted a "[Common Confession](#)", later adopted also by the [American Lutheran Church](#), which does not teach this doctrine, nor indeed even name it. The American Lutheran Church has ever shown marked unwillingness to accept the Old Missouri position on the Scriptures, as confessed in the [Brief Statement of 1932](#) and in the Catechism of that body. But it was willing to accept the "[Pittsburgh Agreement](#)" with the [U.L.C.A.](#), which the latter body accepted only after it had been assured (at Omaha in 1940) that it did not imply verbal inspiration. It is essentially the terminology of this "Pittsburgh Agreement" which the Missouri Synod has accepted in the so-called "Common Confession". Shortly after the Milwaukee Convention took this action, [Dr. Arndt](#), who had been active in the negotiations which produced the "Common Confession" as chairman of Missouri's Committee for Doctrinal Unity, explained in the "Lutheran Witness" that the omission of the term "verbal inspiration" was intentional, "because it is frequently interpreted to signify a mechanical view of inspiration, a mere diction process". Translated into factual language Dr. Arndt's explanation implies that many in the A.L.C. characterize the Scriptural doctrine of verbal inspiration as a "mechanical dictation theory", which indeed they do. The only way to evade this charge was to drop the Scriptural doctrine. So that was done. There has been much discussion as to whether the **omission** of verbal inspiration in the "Common Confession" amounts to denial of that doctrine. To the straightforward mind which likes to face facts directly, rather than approaching them through a haze of fine-spun abstractions, the **omission** of verbal inspiration in a union document dated in 1950, and purporting to be an agreement between a church-body which has hitherto held to verbal inspiration and one which had generally abandoned it, amounts to the **denial** of that doctrine by the party that previously taught it. The doctrine of inspiration taught in the "Common Confession" is simply the so-called "personal inspiration", from which the individual who is so inclined may **deduce** a certain sort of "verbal inspiration" (not that taught in the Bible) while another may decline to make this deduction. The tentatively published Part II of the "Common Confession" uses the term "verbal inspiration", but teaches this Scriptural doctrine as little as the earlier installment. The peculiar concept of inspiration taught in Part II will be treated in that section of our present paper in which we reject the view of the seventeenth century syncretistic theologian [Calixtus](#), who taught that inspiration was merely a sort of divine guidance, assistance, or government.

Suffice it to say at this point that the simple Biblical and Catechismal truth that God the Holy Ghost put into the minds of the writers, or gave to them, the very words which they wrote, is neither expressed nor implied in either the First Part of the "Common Confession" or the Second Part.

The events and trends which I have just sketched in outline had a very great deal to do with our withdrawal from the Missouri Synod and organization of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference on the twenty-sixth of September last [September 26, 1951], and have continued to justify that action in the intervening eleven months. It will therefore be understood that I treat the theme assigned me with reference to these circumstances and events. Those desiring a much more detailed historical treatment of the doctrine as taught by our Lutheran dogmaticians, and of the opposition to this doctrine as it developed among the nineteenth century neo-Lutheran theologians of Germany and that section of American Lutheranism comprised in the U.L.C.A. up to 1936, may find it in my thesis on "The Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration and Its Opponents", which may possibly be published in our projected theological journal. At that time, however, I did not even have at my command any evidence of a departure from the Scriptural doctrine of verbal inspiration in the A.L.C. Much less did I suspect that any tendency in that direction was developing or would ever develop in the Missouri Synod. Obviously, therefore, the orientation of our paper over against the current antithesis will be quite different today than it was sixteen years ago.

## I. [△](#) The Inspiration of Holy Scripture

Holy Scripture is the Word of God because it is divinely inspired. For proof of this thesis no more is required than simply putting into practice the formal principle of Christianity, that Scripture is the only source and norm of all doctrine, thus also of the doctrine concerning the inspiration of Scripture. Three passages are above all others the sedes doctrine or verbal inspiration. We give them in literal translation and according to the best readings of the Greek original. 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-Breathed". 2 Peter 1:21: "Borne along by the Holy Spirit men spake from God". 1 Corinthians 2:13: "Which things also we speak not in words taught of human wisdom but in (words) taught of the spirit, matching spiritual matters with spiritual words". With regard to the first passage, the extreme simplicity of the sentence structure is to be noted. The first predicate adjective of the sentence, "God-breathed", is predicated of the whole of the subject, "Scripture", or the **written** Word of God. The second predicate adjective, "profitable", is connected with the first by the conjunction "and". The Arminian Reformed theologian, Grotius, and later translators and interpreters with thom dogmatic presupposition bears more weight than Greek grammar, have attempted to join the verbal adjective "God-breathed" directly with the subject in the attributive position, thus reading: "All God-breathed Scripture is profitable", and leaving open the possibility that some Scripture is not God-breathed and therefore also not profitable. But the "and" forbids this reading, for this conjunction cannot connect the subject with the predicate, as it would have to do if "God-breathed" is to be reckoned as belonging to the subject and not to the predicate. That Luther, who proceeded from no such dogmatic presupposition as did Grotius and others, unfortunately translated this passage in a similar manner, is probably due to the influence of the Latin Vulgate, the Bible of Luther's youth, which fails to translate the "and", though this conjunction indubitably belongs to the original Greek text. 2 Timothy 3:16 clearly indicates that not only the thoughts but also the written words and the order and arrangement of the words, all of which constitutes Scripture, are from God. The "moving" or "bearing along" spoken of in 2 Peter 1:21, and technically known as the "impulse to write", comprehends both the internal illumination of the mind and suggestion of those things which were to be spoken or written and also the external motion, so that the tongue and pen no less than the mind and spirit did by that impulse whatever they did, so that not only the content or matter was suggested but also the words were put into the mouths or dictated to the pens of the men of God, as His own amanuenses, by the Holy Spirit. Here it may be noted in passing that the participle "moved" or "borne along" may be

ascribed to men, while "inspired" or "God-breathed", as used in 2 Timothy 3:16, can be said only of the Scripture, the words (spoken or written) which they "spoke from God". The men were "moved" to speak "God-breathed" words "from God", and are therefore spoken of as "men borne along by the Holy Spirit". In 1 Corinthians 2:13, while the subject is first person plural ("we"), the quality of being "taught of the Spirit" (which could certainly be attributed to human beings without doing violence to Greek idiom) is, nevertheless, not connected directly with the subject (as, e.g., "being taught of the Spirit, we speak") but with the words used by the subject: "which things also we speak...in (words) taught of the Spirit".

1. [Verbal inspiration, not "real-inspiration", nor "personal-inspiration"](#). The **Scripture** of which inspiration is predicated ("all Scripture is inspired of God" or "God-breathed") consists not of things (realia) or persons, but of written **words**. In 2 Peter 1:21 the holy men of God, "borne along by the Holy Spirit", did not merely mediate or bring forth thoughts, but spoke or brought forth words, "spoke from God". That this "speaking" refers to the **written** words of Scripture is clear from verse 20, where the words that they spoke from God are defined as "prophecy of the Scripture". Compare 1 Corinthians 14:37: "Let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord". Thus the **objects** of inspiration are not **men writers** (who are its **instruments**), but **books, writings, words**. Scripture says **Scripture** (which consists of words, *verba*) is inspired. As to the words in particular, compare 1 Corinthians 2:13: "Which things also we speak not in words taught of human wisdom but in (words) taught human wisdom but in (words) taught of the Spirit, matching spiritual matters with spiritual words", which shows that the Apostles were not left to express the divine thoughts in their own words, but the words were supplied by God's Spirit. In this passage **the words are distinguished from the matters communicated through the words**.

The relation of the Holy Ghost to the writers of Holy Scripture is very clearly defined in Holy Writ when it is stated that the Lord, or the Holy Ghost, spoke "through" the human writers (Matt. 1:22 and 2:15; Acts 1:16 and 4:25; Luke 1:70) with the result that this Words spoken through men was not their word but wholly God's or the Holy Ghost's Word ("the oracles of God", Romans 3:2). Paul witnesses both of his written and oral proclamation that it is the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2P:13). Thus the holy writers were the organs or instruments of the Holy Ghost in communicating His Word to men in written form. To express this relation, the relation, namely, of mere instrumentality, whereby they wrote not their own but God's Word, the Church-Fathers and the old Lutheran theologians, in entire conformity with Scriptural teaching (compare the term "mouth", used in the quotations above, and "voice of one crying in the wilderness", whereby St. John the Baptist describes himself and his function, John 1:23, also: "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer", Psalm 45:1, and: "the Spirit of the Lord spake by me and His Word was in my tongue, 2 Samuel 23:2) used the terminology: "Amanuenses, secretaries, hands, pens". In the "Lutheran Witness" of July 25, 1950, [Dr. Wm. Arndt](#) writes that such "a mere dictation process would violate definite statements of the Scriptures", but he fails to tell us which statements of Scripture have been violated by such language of the ancient Church Fathers, the old Lutheran theologians, and many Synodical Conference Theologians. The quotations given above show rather that they learned this way of illustrating the relation of the sacred writers to the Holy Spirit, as His organs and instruments in communicating His Word to men in written form, from definite statements of Scripture. "Putting words into the mind" (Catechism, Question 10), or "giving Scripture by inspiration", is quite appropriately called "dictation". It is just as fitting to call the giving of words into the mind a dictation as it is to call the giving of a present into the hand a donation. Nothing "mechanical" is implied in "dictation", since only intelligence can take dictation and transmit that which is dictated to other intelligent beings. Modern recording devices do not "take dictation" they merely record the voice. But dictation is a communication of words to the mind; and why should such an illustration (for it is no more than an illustration, and cannot be raised to the questionable dignity of a "dictation theory" cf. [Lenski's Interpretation of Revelation](#), pp. 93 and 94, on this point) be repudiated, if thereby the high and

unfathomable miracle of God, whereby He communicates His words to a human mind, can be made clear to a child?

Another word needs to be said concerning the relation of the Holy Spirit to the human writers, in view of the observable fact of the great differences of style and manner between the various individual amanuenses employed by God. A "mechanical theory" of inspiration would be reduced to the necessity of trying to explain away this observable fact. But the Lutheran dogmatists who maintain the Bible doctrine of verbal inspiration most rigidly have no difficulty in admitting and accounting for this fact without in any way modifying their uncompromising assertion of the sole authorship of the Holy Spirit. Since [Johann Andreas Quenstedt](#), 1617-1688, is frequently referred to by those who do not know his writings as a most horrible specimen of the proponents of the "mechanical theory", we shall quote what this great theologian has to say concerning the condescension of the Holy Spirit in accommodating Himself to the personal and individual literary styles of the holy writers, so that the latter were preserved. "A distinction is to be made between the manner of speaking and the very phrases, words, and vocables. The writers owe their manner of speaking to daily use and custom, or also to education, and hence also arises the diversity especially of the prophetic style. For as they were educated and accustomed to a more exalted or a more colloquial manner of speaking and writing, so the Holy Spirit willed to accommodate Himself and condescend to the genius of men, and thus also to set forth the same things through some more loftily, through others more simply; but that the sacred writers employed these and not other phrases, these and not other vocables or synonyms, this is alone from the divine instigation and inspiration. For the Holy Spirit accommodated Himself to the capacity and genius of the sacred writers, so that they recorded the mysteries according to their accustomed mode of speaking. Hence the Holy Spirit inspired those words into the amanuenses which they would at another time have used if they had been left to themselves."

2. [^](#) **Imparting of the words, not more guidance, assistance, or government.** When the framers of the "Common Confession Part II" decided to admit the phrase "verbally inspired" into the article on "The Church and Education", after intentionally excluding it from the doctrinal article on "The Word", they looked back three hundred years to find a formulation which might appease Missouri conservatives and still not commit the A.L.C. representatives to a doctrine which their church-body in general could hardly be prevailed upon to accept. But in looking back to the seventeenth century they did not learn from the faithful Lutheran Quenstedt, but rather from [the unionistic theologian Calixtus \(d. 1656\)](#). I cannot of course assert positively that any member of either committee was conscious of adopting the view of Calixtus, though it well may have been mediated to them through [Dr. M. Reu](#), who held a similar view, but only that the teaching presented in Part II of the "Common Confession" actually coincides with his. Calixtus, in his conscious endeavor to work out a compromise with the Roman Catholics of his day, was confronted with the problem of developing a formulation which would keep Scripture inerrant, as the Romanist theologians taught that it is, and yet avoid the clear doctrine of verbal inspiration, which was offensive to them as a specifically Protestant *modus docendi* and as placing too great a difference between the written Scripture and the tradition which they held to be of equal authority. He found such a formulation in his definition of inspiration as divine guidance, assistance, or government, and prevention of error. God saw to it that the sacred writers wrote what He wanted recorded in the words which He wanted employed and guarded them from error. What is omitted here is of course just the essential point of the Bible teaching concerning the "God-breathed Scripture" or the "Spirit-taught words", namely that God the Holy Spirit imparted or gave to the writers the words they should write, or, as our Catechism teaches, put the words into the minds of the writers. The "Common Confession", Part II, shows precisely the same omission. There we read: "Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word, that is, God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words which He wanted employed". This is nothing else than the divine guidance or government theory of inspiration taught by Calixtus. According to this teaching the writers were indeed guarded against error, but what they wrote was not

the words of God but merely the inerrant words of men under divine assistance and government. There is certainly no dictation here, and no essential distinction between the orthodox and Scripturally correct words of human teachers and the words recorded by the apostles and prophets in Holy Scripture. We can say of Luther's Small Catechism that God moved him to write in this precious little book what God wanted recorded in the words which He wanted employed, and that we can discover no error either of substance or even of wording in the entire booklet. And yet Luther's Small Catechism is not inspired, for God did not **give** him the words he here recorded, but they are the product of his own divinely guided genius; they are, apart from the direct Scripture quotations embodied in the Catechism, "words which man's wisdom teacheth", a human wisdom devoutly consecrated to God's service and humbly submissive to the "Spirit-taught words" of God's Book, to be sure, but still the words of Dr. Martin Luther, and not the words of the Holy Spirit. We must say of "Common Confession, Part II" what Quenstedt said against Calixtus: "A distinction must be made between mere divine assistance and direction, by which the sacred writers were only guarded against departure from the truth in speaking and writing, and the divine assistance and direction which includes the inspiration and dictation of the Holy Spirit. Not the former but the latter renders the Scripture God-breathed". So the dilemma of the framers of the "Common Confession" is that if they exclude the dictation of the Holy Spirit, or His imparting of the words of Scripture, from their definition of inspiration they fall short of the Biblical teaching that Scripture is "God-breathed" and if they include the dictation of the Holy Spirit, or His imparting of the words of Scripture, in their definition of inspiration the A.L.C. will not accept it. What is offered in Part II of the "Common Confession", as in Part I, is "personal-inspiration", not verbal inspiration.

**3. [^](#) Plenary inspiration, not limited to that previously unknown to the writers or to "religious truths"**. Inspiration extends not only to a part (principal or essential matters, doctrines of faith, that previously unknown to the writers, etc.) but to "all Scripture". In this matter too Calixtus introduced confusion into the theology of his own and later ages. His attenuated concept of inspiration, described in the previous section, did not seem to be adaptable to such portions of Holy Scripture as dealt with the mysteries of faith. Here the writers surely needed not only divine guidance and governance to guard them from error, but they needed a heavenly revelation of things naturally unknown and unknowable to the children of men. And Calixtus failed to distinguish clearly between revelation and inspiration. What could be known only by special divine revelation (in the narrowest sense of the word), that, he granted, was inspired, divinely imparted. Human beings couldn't speak of such things at all unless God told them how to speak. But in that which was already known to the holy writers, there he deemed a mere divine guidance sufficient to preserve them from writing anything that would not be true, seemly, congruous. In accordance with Scriptural doctrine, however, we must confess that also in the latter case, though no special divine revelation (in the narrowest sense of the term) was required to make these things known to them, yet they were inspired to record these things, or (using the word in a broader sense, as equivalent to inspiration) it was revealed to the writers what words they should use and what circumstances they should adduce in recording them.

As the mantle of Calixtus seems to have fallen upon the framers of the "Common Confession" in their omission of the divine imparting of the words, as noted in the former section, so his heritage has been fully developed by the Theologians of the U.L.C.A., and has also infected the framers of the "[United Testimony on Faith and Life](#)" [UTFL] in the American Lutheran Conference, so far as the denial of plenary inspiration is concerned. It would carry us too far afield to show how the U.L.C.A. has consistently carried through its limitation of inspiration to what it calls "the religious truths of the Bible" or "what pertains to God's revelation and our salvation". I have devoted seven pages to this particular topic, as Excursus III, in my thesis on "The Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration and Its Opponents". But it will be timely to show the influence of this error upon the framers of the document drawn up as a basis for the organic merger of several constituent Synods of the American Lutheran Conference, with which merged body, as a representative of Missouri's union committee told us at the



recent Synodical Conference Convention, his Synod will continue to carry on union negotiations. This document, entitled "United Testimony on Faith and Life", makes the following statement concerning the Holy Scriptures: "We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of man's salvation". The statement sounds good until we notice how the purpose is introduced into the definition of the essence, thus giving those who wish to take advantage of the loophole the opportunity to exclude from the inspired Word of God whatever in their opinion does not directly serve the purpose of man's salvation. These sections they may then conveniently ascribe to the "human factor in the Bible", which is strongly insisted upon in another sentence of this article of UTFL.

## II. [△](#) The Inerrancy of Holy Scripture

To anyone who truly and honestly believes in the plenary verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, its absolute inerrancy must be a foregone conclusion. A single statement like that of Titus 1,2, which speaks of "God that cannot lie", would be sufficient to prove the absolute inerrancy of all Scripture, which is all "God-breathed" since with the omniscient God the distinction which obtains among fallible mortals between a lie and a mistake has no validity. But there are other more specific proofs for the inerrancy of Holy Scripture, the most striking being the word of our Lord and Savior in the Gospel according to St. John, ch. 10, v. 35 [John 10:35]: "The Scripture cannot be broken". Since inspiration extends not merely to a part of the Scripture but to the whole of Scripture, and since Scripture consists not of persons or things but of words, it follows that the Scripture in all of its words and in each of its words is completely inerrant. Instances of emphasis on a single word or form of a word are found in Galatians 3,16, compared with Genesis 22:18; Matthew 22:43,44, compared with Psalm 110:1; John 10:35, compared with Psalm 82:6.

Instead of attempting to argue the point of Holy Scripture's inerrancy, so self-evident to all who accept Scripture's own doctrine of inspiration, we shall quote a number of testimonies to this characteristic of God's Book from the writings of the God-given Reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, whom even [Dr. Sasse](#) misrepresents as occupying "*eine freiere Stellung*" on this point, closing with two well known quotations from the dogmaticians, one from Quenstedt and one from Calov, which in their classical conclusiveness are yet not a whit more definite than Father Luther in their testimony to this Scriptural truth.

The testimony of Luther: "The saints could err in their writing and could sin in their life; the Scripture cannot err". [St. Louis XIX, 1073](#) [[German text](#)]; "The Misuse of the Mass" [Am. Ed. vol. 36](#), p. 137].

"I do not reject them (the teachers of the Church), but since everyone knows that they have erred as men, I will not give them credence, except so far as they can offer me proof of their understanding from the Scripture, which has never erred." [St. Louis XV, 1481](#). [[German text](#)]; "Defense and Explanation of all Articles", [Am. Ed. vol. 32](#), p. 11]

"That deceived the good man Oecolampadius, that Scriptures which are against each other must indeed be harmonized and the one part receive an understanding which will be consistent with the other; for it is certain that the Scripture cannot be divided against itself. But what he did not notice and consider was, that he was the man who professed such disagreement of the Scripture and ought to prove it; but he took it for granted and brought it forward as though it were certain and already proved. That is where he made his mistake. But if they would first take heed to themselves, and see to it that they speak nothing else than God's Word, as St. Peter teaches, and would leave their own affirmations and assertions at home, then they would not occasion so much misfortune. The Word: "Scripture is not against itself", would not have misled Oecolampadius, for it is founded in God's

Word, that God does not lie and that His Word does not lie." [St. Louis XX, 798](#). ["That These Word of Christ, 'This Is My Body', etc., Still Stand Firm Against The Fanatics", [Am. Ed., vol. 37](#), pp. 50-51]

"It is impossible that the Scripture should be against itself; except only that it seems so to the ignorant and hardened hypocrites". [St. Louis IX, 356](#). Erlangen, Commentarium in Epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas, Tomus I, pp. 388,389. Eerdmans Edition (1930), p. 234. [paragraph 285: [German text](#); apparently not in [Am. Ed. vol. 26](#), ~ p. 267-268]

"I myself am heartily displeased with myself and hate myself, because I know that everything which the Scripture says of Christ is true, than which there can be nothing greater, more important, more pleasant, more joyous, and which should render me unctuous with the highest joy, because I see that the Holy Scripture is harmonious in all its parts, so that one cannot entertain the least doubt of the truth and certainty of such an important matter; and yet I am hindered by the wickedness of my flesh and so held captive by the law of sin that I cannot transfuse this benefit though all my members, and through my very bones and marrow, as I should like to go". [St. Louis VI, 177](#). Erlangen, *Exegetica Opera Latina*, Volumen XXIII, *Enarratio uberior in Locum Jesaiac*, Cap. 9, *de Christo et regno ejus*, etc. (Isaiah 9,6), p. 392. [ref. [Am. Ed. vol. 16](#), but apparently not in this edition]

"So there are many passages in the Scripture which according to the letter are in conflict with each other, but when the causes are indicated then all is right." [St. Louis XVI, 2185](#). ["On The Councils And The Church", paragraph # 75 – [German text](#); [Am. Ed. vol. 41](#), p. 54]

"We have the articles of our faith sufficiently well founded in Scripture; hold to that, and do not let it be twisted with glosses nor interpreted according to reason, how it harmonizes or not; but, if anyone wants to cheat you by reason and your own thoughts, then say: Here I have the plain Word of God and my faith; I will stick to that, and neither think, ask, or hear anything beyond it, nor speculate how this or that harmonizes, nor listen to you even though you bring another text or passage as though contrary to it, drawn out of your own head and smeared with your spittle; for they will not be contrary to each other nor to any article of faith, even though in your head they may be contrary and fail to harmonize." [St. Louis IX, 828](#). ["Sermon on Ephesians 6, 10-17", [German text](#); not in *Am. Ed.*]

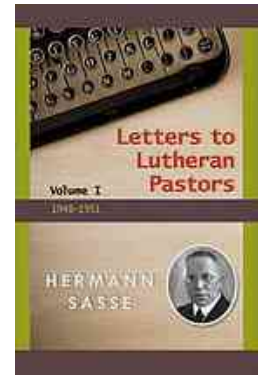
"I beg and faithfully warn every pious Christian not to stumble at the simplicity of the language and the stories that will often meet him there. He should not doubt that however simple they may seem, these are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the high majesty, power, and wisdom of God; for this is Scripture, and it makes fools of all the wise and prudent, and stands open to the small and foolish, as Christ says, in Matthew 11,25. Therefore let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that he may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds, Luke 2,12. Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them." [St. Louis XIV, 3.4](#). Holman VI, 367,368. ["Prefaces to the Old Testament" – [German Text](#); [Am. Ed. vol 35](#), p. 236]

The testimony of Quenstedt: "The Holy canonical Scripture in the original is of infallible truth and free from every error, or, which is the same, in the Holy canonical Scripture there is no untruth, no falsity, no error not even the least, whether in matter or in words; but everything, whatsoever is handed down therein, is most true, whether it is dogmatical, or moral, or historical, chronological, topographical, [onomastical](#); no ignorance, oversight, or forgetfulness, no defect of memory, can or ought to be attributed to the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit in recording the sacred writings." (Quenstedt I,77)

The testimony of Calov: "No error, even in unimportant matters, no defect of memory, not to say untruth, can have any place in all the Sacred Scriptures". (Quoted in Schmid, tr. Jacobs and Hay,

p.49). [[Google Books, 1876 edition, p. 67](#)]

This is a position which, in American Lutheran circles, the late Dr. M. Reu, for instance, did not hold, and could not logically have held, accepting, as he did, a view similar to that of Calixtus on inspiration. A similar position has been taken also by Dr. Sasse in several of his "[Briefe an Lutherische Pastoren](#)" [[Letters to Lutheran Pastors](#), CPH]. Dr. Reu did not say that there actually are errors in Holy Scripture or that he had discovered any errors therein, but merely declined to assert an **a priori** impossibility of errors occurring in the Bible. This was the only logical position he could take on the basis of his teaching concerning inspiration. Those who hold the position of Dr. Reu and of Dr. Sasse are usually willing to speak of verbal inspiration. As a matter of fact they insist that they hold to verbal inspiration, "if it be rightly understood" but by such right understanding they mean the Calixtine guidance and government theory, allowing for direct verbal communication in matters which concern "God's revelation and man's salvation" ("supplied to the holy writers . . . fitting word", C.C., Article V), while other matters are ascribed to the "human factor in the Bible", and in these the possibility of error cannot be absolutely excluded. Therefore no document which asserts of the Scriptures "that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10,35," as does our "Brief Statement", could ever find acceptance in U.L.C. or A.L.C. circles. In the Baltimore Convention of the U.L.C.A. (October 1938), in which this body was approaching agreement with the A.L.C. on the doctrine of inspiration, it specifically rejected these words of the "Brief Statement" as "not in accordance with our Lutheran Confessions, nor with the Scriptures themselves". Proceedings, page 468. The ill-fated attempt to combine the "Brief Statement" and the 1938 "Declaration of the A.L.C. Commissioners" in the "Doctrinal Affirmation" greatly weakened this assertion of our "Brief Statement" and omitted most of it, and still proved unsatisfactory to both the negotiating bodies. If you want to be sure where people stand on inspiration, don't just ask them to affirm a belief in "verbal inspiration", but ask them to subscribe this one sentence of the "Brief Statement" as it stands. Then you will find out. Imagine inserting such a sentence into either Part I or Part II of the "Common Confession"!



### III, [^](#) The Inviolability of Holy Scripture

The term "inviolability" designates that divine authority of Holy Scripture which makes it a [crimen laesae majestatis](#) to augment or diminish its God-given content and scope. From Pieper's "Unionism", pages 5 and 6 [[Oregon/Washington 1924](#)], Walther's "*Rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhaengigen Evangelisch - Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde*", [pages 63 and 64](#) [The Form of a (Lutheran) Christian Congregation], his "*Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden*", [pages 60](#) and [104-108](#), and finally from his *Pastorale*, [pages 90 ff.](#) [*Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*; see [here](#) for sources of all of Walther's writings], we have assembled the following list of proof-passages, warnings, threats, which assert the inviolability of Holy Scripture and the divine judgment against any deviation from the divine teaching which it imparts: Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 13:1-10; Joshua 23:6; Proverbs 30:5-6; Isaiah 8:20; 29:13 (compare Matthew 15:8-9); Jeremiah 23:28,31,32; Matthew 5:18-19; 28:20; Luke 16:29; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Revelation 22:18-19. In these passages God has expressly forbidden that anything be taught in His Church except what He Himself has commanded and that nothing of what He has commanded be omitted or neglected; and has expressly declared that He will not be served by the commandments and precepts of men.

In Dr. Walther's book on "The Lutheran Church the True Visible Church", [Thesis XVII](#), we read as follows: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts the whole written Word of God (as God's Word



), deems nothing in it superfluous or of little worth but everything needful and important, and also accepts all teaching deduced of necessity from the words of Scripture". The five testimonies adduced from the writings of Luther (four of the five from his polemical treatises on the Lord's Supper) under this thesis all have important bearing on the inviolability of Holy Scripture, and we shall therefore reproduce them in full in the English language.

"It helps them (the Sacramentarians) not at all that they insist, that in all other matters except this (concerning the Holy Supper) they have the highest esteem for the words of God and the entire Gospel. My dear man, God's Word is God's Word, and suffers no tampering. He who calls God a liar and blasphemes Him in one word, and says it is but a small thing that He is blasphemed and called a liar, he blasphemes all of God and thinks lightly of all blasphemy of God. It is one God, who does not permit Himself to be divided, or to be praised in one place and in another blamed, honored in one place and in another despised. The Jews believe the Old Testament, but because they do not believe in Christ it profits them nothing. The circumcision of Abraham is now an old dead thing and no longer necessary or of use; yet if I would say God had not commanded it at that time it would profit me nothing even to believe in the Gospel. That is what St. James means when he says: "Whosoever shall offend in one point, he is guilty of all", James 2:10." [St. Louis XX, 775](#). [Paragraph 28 – "That These Words of Christ, 'This Is My Body' Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics"; [Am. Ed. vol. 37](#), p. 26]

"If they were not such frivolous despisers of Scripture, one single passage out of the Scripture should move them as much as though the world were full of Scripture, as indeed it is. For it is so with me that every clear passage makes the world too narrow for me." [St. Louis XX, 788](#). [Paragraph 59 – [German text](#); [Am. Ed. vol. 37](#), p. 40]

"It is certain that whoever does not rightly believe one article or will not believe it (after he has been admonished and instructed), he surely believes none in earnest and with right faith. And he who is so bold that he dare deny God or give Him the lie in one word, and does this wilfully after he has been instructed once or twice, he dares (and indeed actually does) deny God and give Him the lie in all His words. Therefore it must be: roundly and clearly, believe all or believe nothing. The Holy Spirit does not permit Himself to be divided, that He should teach truly in one part and in the other teach falsely or permit us to believe falsely. Saving where there are weak brethren who are ready to be instructed and do not stubbornly contradict. Otherwise, if it should hold good that anyone can deny one article with impunity because he holds all the rest to be right (although basically that is impossible), then no heretic would ever be condemned, in fact there could be no heretics upon earth. For all heretics are of this sort, that they first begin in one article alone, and thereafter all the rest must follow and all together be denied; just as a ring, if it is burst or cracked, is of no value at all any more, and if a bell is broken in one place it no longer sounds and is altogether useless." [St. Louis XX, 1781.1782](#). [paragraphs 49-50; "Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament"; [Am. Ed. vol. 38](#), p. 308]

Of the lengthy citation from the Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, ch.5, vv. 9-12) we shall give only the last paragraph in the translation of Erasmus Middleton, as published by Eerdmans in 1930 (which, by the way, is far from complete in this section). The entire passage, which is one of the most precious and instructive expositions in Luther's works, may be read in the [St. Louis Edition, IX, 642 to 656](#), or in the Eerdmans Edition, pages 445 to 454. [[Am. Ed. vol. 27](#), pgs. 35-47, below from p. 46]

"Wherefore let us learn to advance and extol the majesty and authority of God's Word. For it is no small trifle, (as brain-sick heads surmise at this day); but every tittle thereof is greater than heaven and earth. Wherefore, in this respect, we have no regard of Christian charity or concord, but we sit, as it were on the judgment-seat; that is to say, we curse and condemn all men which in the least point to deface or corrupt the majesty of God's Word: 'for a little leaven maketh sour the whole lump'. But if they leave us God's word entire and sound, we are not only ready to keep charity and peace with them;

but also we offer ourselves to be their servants, and to do for them whatsoever we are able: if not, let them perish and be cast down into hell; and not only they, but even the whole world also, so that God and His true Word do remain. For as long as He remaineth, life, salvation, and the faithful shall also remain."

Our last citation is again from the powerful polemical writing, "Dass diese Worte Christi, 'Das ist mein Leib', usw., noch feststehen wider die Schwarmgeister": "Nor does it do them any good to boast how in all other parts they teach and praise Christ rightly. For he who in one part or article earnestly denies and blasphemes Christ and puts Him to shame cannot rightly teach or honor Christ in any other place, but it is all hypocrisy and deceit, however fine a show it makes. For it must be: lose Christ entirely or keep Him entirely. He cannot be divided into parts; He will be loved and honored with the whole heart and the whole soul." [St. Louis XX, 873](#). ["That These Word of Christ, 'This Is My Body', etc., Still Stand Firm Against The Fanatics", [Am. Ed., vol. 37](#), p. 130-131]

The last clause of Dr. Walther's thesis: "and also accepts all teaching deduced of necessity from the words of Scripture", introduces a special point which must not be overlooked in the consideration of the inviolability of Scripture. Quenstedt treats this point very adequately as cited by Dr. Walther: "Although some particulars which belong to faith are not expressly or in so many letters or in so many words contained in Scripture, yet it is sufficient that they are found therein according to their substance and import, so that they may be derived and concluded therefrom by a correct and cogent deduction. From the fact that one denies that all necessary dogmas are expressed in so many letters in Scripture it is not valid to conclude that therefore an unwritten tradition is necessary. For deductions rightly drawn from the Scripture are God's Word according to substance and sense, even though not so according to letter and sound. 'What is concluded from Scripture by deduction' (that is, by a self-evident, entirely obvious, and legitimate deduction) 'is equivalent to what is written', says [Gregory Nazianzen](#)." The Scripture proof for the above assertions is sufficiently evident in our Lord's use of such a deduction from Scripture in Matthew 22:29-32, where, as [Johann Daniel Arcularius](#) declares, "He has consecrated and ennobled such a deduction with the name of Scripture". The demand, sometimes put forward by the liberals, that everything which is taught as a doctrine of Scripture must be contained therein [\*expressis verbis\*](#) is not a Scriptural demand.

There is doubtless no attribute of Scripture more disregarded and sinned against, also in neo-Missourian circles, than its inviolability. The average Missourian will not lightly say that Scripture errs in a certain point, but he will say that a Scriptural dictum is just "a detail of doctrine" which is of no particular importance, or that only "a question of terminology" is involved, or that it is "all a matter of interpretation", or that it "need not be divisive". That Scripture infallibly interprets itself, and that Scripture's own interpretation must be accepted unmodified by any extraneous notions imported into Scripture from "science" or experience, is a principle that has been largely overlooked in modern Missouri even by the staunchest "conservatives". Dr. Pieper in an ever-memorable and classically definitive sentence of his "**Christliche Dogmatik**" ([L. p.577](#)) [English ed. pgs. 472-473] lays down the principle: "[\*Es ist eines Christen unwuerdig, die heilige Schrift, die er doch als Gottes eigenes Wort erkannt hat, nach menschlichen Meinungen \(Hypothesen\), also auch nicht nach dem sogenannten kopernikanischen Weltsystem, umzudeuten oder sich umdeuten zu lassen\*](#)". It is well said that Rev. F. E. Pasche's "Bible und Astronomie" offers "proof that not a single one of about sixty verses, in which the earth is said to stand still, and the sun and all stars are said to move, may be interpreted in such a way as if really the reverse were the case". Such "interpretation" is not [exegesis](#) but [eisegesis](#). It brings into Scripture a world-view which no one has ever found in Scripture and according to this alien importation reverses the plain meaning of what Scripture actually says. The plea that "Scripture accommodates itself to human concepts", that is, rightly understood, that it speaks in intelligible language, is not valid when such concepts are supposed to be inherently erroneous. Scripture never accommodates itself to **erroneous** human concepts. Moses could have made the "Copernican" world-view intelligible to the people of the sixteenth century B.C. as readily as Copernicus made it

intelligible to the people of the sixteenth century A.D., **if only this world-view had been true to fact.** The proper scope of the Scripture is not to teach history, geography, natural science, but is given in John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15 ff; 1 John 1:4 etc. When Scripture, however, **incidentally** touches upon these matters it is still inviolable truth (John 10:35), and to "interpret" the pronouncements of Scripture even on these matters in accordance with supposed knowledge derived from sources outside the Scriptures (human hypotheses) is to dishonor the divine and self-interpreting Word. We of the [Orthodox Lutheran Conference](#), operating, as we do, without benefit of "the human element" or "human factor" in Scripture, will, by God's grace, not be equipped to get out of Scripture any other meaning than that which the Holy Ghost put into it. To that end we pray:

**"Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word  
We here may live and die, dear Lord;  
And when our journey endeth here,  
Receive us into glory there."**

**Wallace H. McLaughlin**